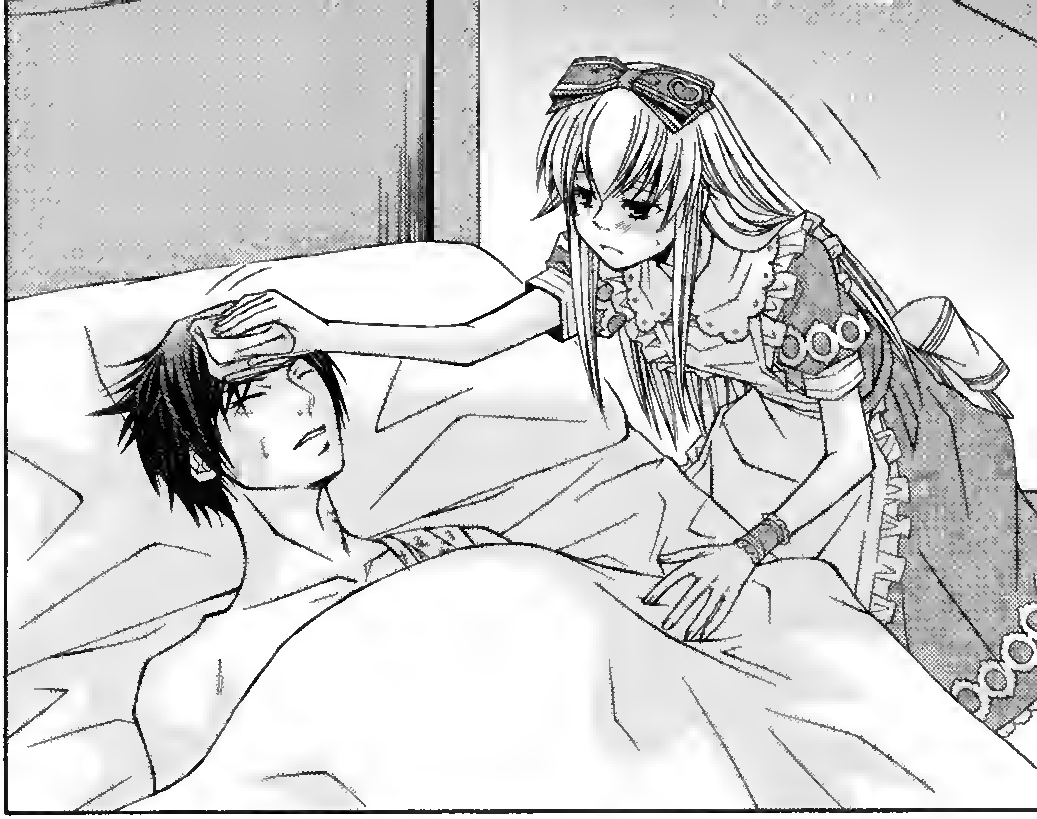
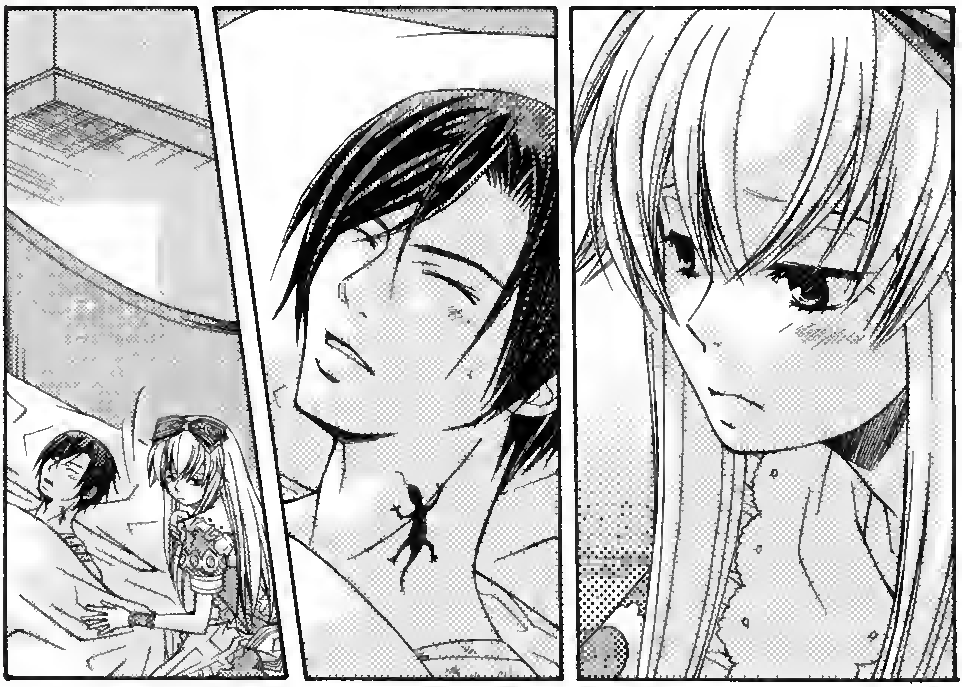
(sigh)
LEAN
LIFT
It's hard to reach Sir Gray's level.
I followed the same recipe, still...
M-My apologies!
ARGG!
I WANNA DRINK DELICIOUS COCOA!!
BOO! BOO!
Eek!





Sniff
HE STILL WON'T WAKE UP...
TOSS
KYA!
ELLIOT! BE MORE GENTLE!
ELLIOT! DON'T WORRY!
IT'S NOT FINE! HE'S SERIOUSLY INJURED!
AT LEAST THE BLEEDING SEEMS TO HAVE STOPPED
THANK GOOD-NESS
. . .

ELLIOT...
THAT PLACE IS PRETTY UNSAFE, SO...
BUT YOU WOULDN'T HAVE MOVED FROM THE SPOT EITHER IF WE DID THAT.
WITH HOW TOUGH HE IS, I THINK THE LIZARD WOULD'VE BEEN ALRIGHT EVEN IF WE LEFT HIM THERE.
THANK YOU.
I'M REALLY AWFUL...
ALL I DO IS TROUBLE EVERY-ONE.
I'M SORRY.
NAH, IT TOTALLY OUR FAULT THIS TIME.
SORRY ABOUT GETTING YOU INVOLVED IN OUR MESS.
WHOA!
SLAP

LATER!
I'LL LEAVE HIM TO YOU THEN.
AH!
THANKS, ELLIOT!
REALLY, THANK YOU!
. . .
ALICE.
IT'S JUST HOW YOU SAID.
. . .
I SHOULD HAVE STAYED PUT.

IT'S ALWAYS LIKE THIS.
I ALWAYS DO THE WRONG THING,
AND CAUSE TROUBLE FOR EVERY-ONE.
pat
ALL THINGS CONSIDERED, THINGS DIDN'T TURN OUT THAT BAD, RIGHT?
...
NIGHT-MARE?
LOOK, HE'S ALIVE.
HE HAS RECOVERED ENOUGH TO EVEN HAVE HIS MIND BARRIER UP.
FOR HIM, AN INJURY LIKE THIS MIGHT NOT BE A BIG DEAL.

IT MIGHT TAKE A FEW MORE TIME PERIODS THAN USUAL FOR HIM TO RECOVER COMPLETELY,
BUT YOU'LL SEE HIS SCAR WILL DISAPPEAR IN LESS TIME THAN IT TOOK FOR YOUR FINGER TO HEAL
STILL...
WHY DON'T YOU GET SOME REST, ALICE?
YOU LOOK TERRIBLY TIRED.
YOU WOULDN'T WANT THAT, RIGHT?
TO HAVE HIM SEE YOU LIKE THIS ONCE HE WAKES UP.
...
Sigh
LOOKING FOR SOME-THIN'?
HMM?
...
AFTER CARRYING MR. LIZARD TO THE TOWER,
YOU'VE BEEN WANDERING AROUND THIS PLACE THE WHOLE TIME.
TOTTER

OH?
MR. LIZARD, RIGHT?
ABOUT WHO ALICE LIKED...
DID YA KNOW?
HMM?
Sighhh
ALICE IS PRETTY EASY TO FIGURE OUT.
SO IT REALLY IS LIKE THAT!
HE WAS EVEN THINKING OF MARRYING HER!
AAAH!!!
WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO SAY TO BLOOD!?
HOW CAN I TELL HIM!!
THAT YOU'RE NOT THE ONE SHE LIKES!
Sighhh
GLOOM

Sigh
I can't say it...
plod
plod
This whole marriage thing was just you guys' misunderstanding.
I think Mr Hatter knew that from the start.
TMP
TMP
...
whoosh
I SAW! I JUST PEEKED FROM A DISTANCE THOUGH...
OOH, I WANTED TO SEE THAT.
...AND THEN,
THE MARCH HARE CARRIED SIR GRAY INSIDE...

DID SOMETHING JUST PASS BY?
UH, I DON'T THINK SO?
FWOOSH
NOT AT ALL. YOU SHOULD DO IT IF IT COMFORTS YOU.
I'M SORRY. DOING THIS WHEN THERE'S SO MUCH WORK...
EVEN THOUGH I KNOW I CAN'T DO ANYTHING JUST BY SITTING NEXT TO HIM...
I'M GOING TO TAKE IT EASY WHILE I CAN.
YOU SHOULD GET SOME REST TOO.
ALL RIGHT.
HE'S GOING TO PESTER ME ABOUT WORK AGAIN AS SOON AS HE WAKES.

HMM?
...
CHCK
SIGH
...
I WANT TO DRINK DELICIOUS COCOA...
MUMBLE
...
HMPH
GOOD GRIEF...

Chick
To think it was soaked in blood...
The bandage has become clean.
WHO IS IT?
ACE...
WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
HE MUST'VE STABBED HIMSELF PRETTY HARD.
appear
I WAS SURE HE'D BE UP AND ABOUT BY NOW.
OH? MR. LIZARD'S STILL ASLEEP?
Imp
BUT YOU KNOW...

HE'S NOT JUST PRETENDING TO SLEEP, IS HE?
clink
gasp
WHAT'RE YOU THINK-ING!?
GRAY'S INJURED!
YEAH.
BUT IT'S MR. LIZARD WE'RE TALKING ABOUT HERE.
whoosh
IF HE WAS AWAKE, HE COULD DODGE.
DON'T BE RIDICU-LOUS!
BY THAT LOGIC, HE'D DIE UNLESS HE'S FAKING SLEEP!
OH, IS THAT SO?
IT IS!
BUT...

GRAY IS UNIQUE.
THERE AREN'T ANY REPLACE-MENTS FOR HIM.
What's wrong with that? There are countless replacements for him.
SAY WHAT?
clink
I DON'T THINK THAT AT ALL.
AND BESIDES, NO ONE CAN REPLACE JULIUS.
THERE ARE.
AND ISN'T MR. LIZARD A REPLACE-MENT FOR JULIUS TO YOU IN THE FIRST PLACE?
DON'T JUST SAY WHATEVER YOU LIKE!
BECAUSE YOU HAVE MR. LIZARD.
YOU DON'T NEED JULIUS ANY-MORE
BUT YOU'VE FORGOTTEN ABOUT JULIUS.

I HAVEN'T FORGOTTEN JULIUS AT ALL!
I'VE NEVER THOUGHT I DON'T NEED HIM ANYMORE! HE'S STILL IMPORTANT TO ME EVEN IF WE'RE APART!
DON'T GO MAKING UP WEIRD STUFF LIKE THAT!
...
YOU SAID...
...THAT YOU REMAINED IN THIS WORLD BECAUSE JULIUS WAS HERE.
I DID.
WHAT ABOUT NOW?
NOW?
chink
chink

RIGHT NOW JULIUS ISN'T NEAR YOU.
YOU'VE GOT NO REASON TO STAY HERE, DO YOU?
SO WHY WON'T YOU OPEN THE DOORS?
They'll let you go where you want to go most.
Chink
Chink
Chink
YOU COULD GO STRAIGHT TO JULIUS.
Chink
Chink
. . .
I WON'T OPEN THE DOORS.
...NO,
I CAN'T OPEN THEM,
BECAUSE I MIGHT NOT END UP WHERE JULIUS IS.

IF YOU WANT TO OPEN THE DOORS SO MUCH, WHY DON'T YOU DO IT YOURSELF?
BESIDES, THERE ARE PEOPLE HERE WHO ARE IMPORTANT TO ME TOO.
HMMM?
Shiver
IF IT'S YOU, YOU'D BE ABLE TO REACH JULIUS WITHOUT ANY-
IF YOU OPENED THE DOORS NOW, ON THE OTHER SIDE WOULD BE MR. LIZARD, RIGHT?
HE'S BECOME THE REASON YOU'RE STAYING IN THIS WORLD.
YOU SURE ARE DEVIOUS, MR. LIZARD.

thump
THAT'S SUPPOSED TO BE JULIUS'S ROLE!
ACE!!

THIS IS CAT ABUSE.
GEEZ, WHAT DO YOU THINK CATS ARE?
tmp
tmp
twip
Will he make it?
Or will I have to..?

ENOUGH WITH THE ACCU-SATIONS ALREADY!
I TOLD YOU GRAY ISN'T A REPLACEMENT FOR JULIUS!
I STAYED IN THIS WORLD BECAUSE OF JULIUS.
THAT FACT HASN'T CHANGED.
BUT I STAYED IN THIS WORLD BECAUSE I FOUND SOMEONE IMPORTANT TO ME.
AND THE NUMBER OF THOSE PRECIOUS PEOPLE HAS INCREASED.
OF COURSE, GRAY'S ONE OF THEM TOO.

EVERYONE TOGETHER IS THE REASON I'M STAYING IN THIS WORLD.
EVERY ONE OF THEM IS IMPOR-TANT TO ME.
THERE ARE ALSO NIGHT-MARE, BORIS...
BLOOD, ELLIOT, THE TWINS, PETER, VIVALDI...
AND YOU, ACE... YOU MAY BE STRONG,
BUT WHAT YOU DO IS ALL MESSED UP!
YOU DON'T EVEN TRY TO UNDER-STAND YOUR OWN FEEL-INGS AND YOU KEEP GETTING LOST!
I CAN'T GO OFF ON MY OWN AND LEAVE BEHIND SOMEONE LIKE YOU WHEN YOU CAN'T EVEN GO WHERE YOU WANT TO! I'D BE TOO WORRIED!

AND ALSO...
(Hm)
ACCORDING TO NIGHT-MARE,
IF I STAY HERE, MAYBE DURING THE NEXT MOVE...
OR THE NEXT, OR THE ONE AFTER THAT...
YOU'D BE ABLE TO MEET JULIUS AGAIN?
YES. AND I BELIEVE IT.

ACE...
EVEN WITHOUT OPENING ONE OF THOSE DOORS, SOMEDAY FOR SURE...
WE'LL SEE JULIUS AGAIN.
ZING

I'LL DEFINITELY GET A PERFECT 100 NEXT TIME!
YOU SHOULD HELP ME TOO!
...YEAH.
Jump
ME TOO?
THAT'S WHY, RIGHT NOW, I'M LEARNING HOW TO MAKE DELICIOUS COFFEE FOR WHEN THAT HAPPENS.
YOU KNOW THAT JULIUS WOULD GRADE THE COFFEE I MADE FOR HIM, RIGHT?
YES, YOU.
WEREN'T YOU LAUGHING HARD WHEN I FOUGHT WITH JULIUS BECAUSE HE GAVE ME A LOW SCORE?
Uhhh...
COME TO THINK OF IT...
VIVALDI SAID THE TEA I BREWED WAS BARELY PASS-ABLE.
I WANT TO MASTER BREWING TEA TOO WHILE I'M AT IT.
Sigh
ANYONE CAN GRADE YOUR COFFEE, YOU KNOW.
NO!
IT'S MEANING-LESS UNLESS IT'S JULIUS!

PEOPLE OF THIS WORLD SAY THEY'RE ALL REPLACE-ABLE.
THEY DON'T EVEN TREASURE THEIR OWN LIVES.
BUT JULIUS IS THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN GRADE MY COFFEE.
FOR ME, NO PERSON CAN RE-PLACE AN-OTHER.
THERE ARE...
...COUNTLESS REPLACE-MENTS FOR EVERYONE, YOU KNOW.
THERE AREN'T!
YOU ALL ARE THE STRANGE ONES FROM MY VIEW-POINT.
YOU'RE WEIRD.
. . .

AND WHAT ABOUT YOU?
DON'T YOU HAVE SOMETHING YOU WANT TO DO UNTIL YOU MEET JULIUS AGAIN?
NOT REALLY.
AT LEAST GIVE IT SOME THOUGHT.
OH!
IN THAT CASE...!
YES? WHAT IS IT?
TO ENSURE MY ARM DOESN'T GET DULL, I'LL PLAY WITH MR. LIZARD A LOT!
DON'T! YOU'LL BOTHER GRAY!
NOT AT ALL! IT'D BE GOOD FOR MR. LIZARD TOO!
HONESTLY, I'M DISAPPOINTED HE GOT THIS BANGED UP BY A BUNCH OF SMALL FRIES.
HE SHOULD TRAIN MORE!
OH...
ACTUALLY...
THAT WAS BECAUSE OF ME.
DOESN'T MATTER.
IF THAT WAS THE OLD MR. LIZARD, HE'D HAVE SAVED YOU WITHOUT GETTING A SCRATCH.

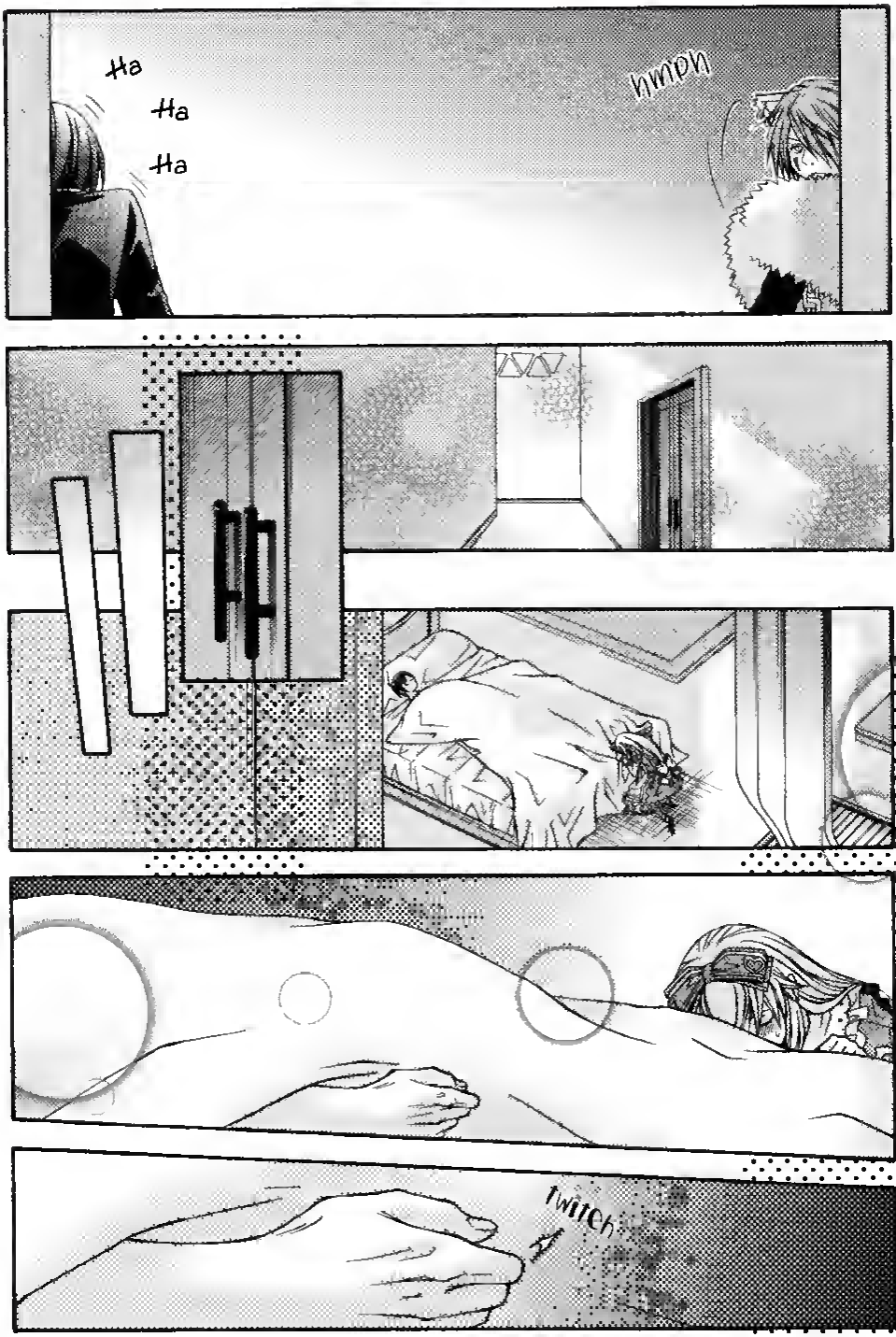
?
ACE...?
THAT'S NOT-
MR. LIZARD NEEDS TO TRAIN MORE TOO.
turn
I'M GONNA HEAD BACK.
ANYWAY, DOESN'T LOOK LIKE MR. LIZARD CAN KEEP ME COM-PANY.
That Face...
I've never seen Ace look like that.
Click
Shiver
Ah...
MR. LIZARD!
LOOKING FORWARD TO NEXT TIME,
Click

Did he know..?
Either way...
Ace...
Shiver
Shiver
Shiver
Shiver
Thud
...
THANK YOU
THANK GOOD-NESS ...
ACE...
...

FWIP
TMP
TMP
glance
hmph
TMP
TMP
I HURRIED HERE AND DIDN'T GET TO DO A THING.
. . .
NO, YOUR PRESENCE WAS REASSURING.
WHO KNOWS WHAT WOULD HAVE HAPPENED TO ALICE...
... IF GRAY HAD BEEN KILLED RIGHT IN FRONT OF HER.

CONFRONT THE KNIGHT!? ARE YOU KIDDING ME!?
YOU WERE THE ONLY ONE WHO COULD MAKE IT IN TIME TO CONFRONT THE KNIGHT.
YOU WERE HERE, YOU COULD'VE DONE IT YOURSELF!
WHAT I'VE GOT A PROBLEM WITH IS HOW YOU CALLED ME!
I DON'T WANT YOUR VOICE SUDDENLY RINGING IN MY HEAD EVER AGAIN!
IT GOT YOU TO COME QUICKLY.
...ME?
SHUDDER
THERE'S NOT A SINGLE PERSON WHO DOESN'T FEAR YOU, RIGHT?
EVEN THAT KNIGHT WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO TAKE YOU ON
INDEED.
I DO HAVE AN IDEA OF WHAT HE'S AFRAID OF.

NOT BEING ABLE TO ADMIT WHAT'S MOST DIFFICULT TO HIM...
HE TRULY IS A DIFFICULT MAN.
"You're just all name!"
"What part of you is scary?"
THERE IS SOMEONE WHO DOESN'T FEAR ME.
NOTHING. I JUST REMEMBERED...
CHUCKLE
WHAT!?
AH!
JUMP
IRKED
Ha
Ha
Ha
I CAN GUESS WHO...


Ha
Ha
Ha
hmph
twitch

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